

Richie Tozier and the Terrible, Horrible, Not-at-all Chuckalicious Day by **cjdreams98**

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Summary: ! IT Chapter Two spoilers ! My take on what might have happened after young Richie's encounter with it. Alternatively: clowns, pining, and Dr K. Basically, any excuse for more Reddie content ;) Mostly canon compliant, some lines straight from the film/book, so trigger warnings: homophobic slurs, internalised homophobia, anxiety, mention of character death, injury.

1. Chapter 1

A/N. I have well and truly fallen down the Reddie rabbit hole. Please enjoy the resulting ramblings! Feedback always appreciated, let me know if you want me to continue :)

What, are you tryna bone my little cousin?

Fuck out of here, fag!

Not your fucking boyfriend.

Faggot.

Fairy.

Fairyfuckingfaggot!

No! Richie tries to yell, hating the shuddering cry that escapes him instead. He wants to scream and curse until his lungs collapse, but sheer horror has rendered him speechless. Hollow. For perhaps the first time in his life, he cannot say a word. All he can see is a blueblack fog. All he feels is the nauseas pit in his stomach, the terror in his bones. The only sound in the world is

fairies fly, me foine girly lad, they float, let's float!

the pounding of his sneakers on the pavement as he races blindly across the streets of Derry. He runs so fast he

floats

can't feel his legs and suddenly he thinks his lungs really might collapse if he doesn't stop so he throws himself on the nearest available surface and dry heaves until it hurts.

'Shit. Fuck.' Richie murmurs, and surely it is only the running, only the tripleteime beat of his heart that closes his throat and makes his voice so thin and pained.

Yes. Only the running.

'Fuck.' He repeats, lifting his glasses and dragging a hand across his eyes to wipe the

babytears

sweat away. He lets his glasses fall again and stares blankly, barely noticing when his head drops too.

Grass. Scuffed kicks with the laces coming undone. The statue behind the bench he sits on. A weight on his chest. He allows each part of the picture to

float

drift aimlessly across his mind. Another part thinks of the Losers, of Big Bill and Stan the Man, and everything they might have said if they'd seen him today. Anything not to think about

brown eyes

blonde curls

legs on legs and palm on palm the hammock the clubhouse street fighter clubhouse

your secret, your secret, your dirty little secret

the stupid stuff crammed in his brain. Certainly, the furthest thoughts from his head as his breath snags in his throat and the vice tightens around his chest is *this must be how asthma feels* and *no wonder Eddie's ma thinks he's dying*.

No. Nothing like that occurs to Richie in the few seconds before it happens.

Not that he'd say if it had.

It happens like this:

He blinks at the ground, wet eyes scrunched for a second; a second in which the Voices begin to blare through his skull, a hundred bullhorns at once, –

Somethin' smells like caca to me señor

I do believe this chap requires our utmost attention

Sure an' begorrah, it's a foine day laddie, foine as fairies wings, a fine day to -

float -

fly -

FLOAT

and his skin crawls so violently he thinks he might puke. Before Richie has time to stop himself, he turns his head – and there it is. There *It* is.

The huge, jeering face of Paul Bunyan.

Except...

Paul reeks of whiskey and rot and shaving cream. Paul moves. Paul has a smile that could shish-kebab Babe and an axe that leers in the sun like plastic just couldn't –

He – It - roars.

Richie jumps like there's a firecracker up his ass.

The axe comes swinging down, swings low, sweet chariot, and the Voices scream that if he doesn't move now...

Richie lunges out of the way and, for the second time in as many hours, runs for his life.

Fuck!

Isn't this just chuckalicious?

Beep-beep Richie, he tells himself and has to bite back an insane burst of laughter as the axe splits the ground beside him. The next blow sends him sprawling and snatches the air from his, well, everywhere. He curls up, trying to decide if he'll be crushed or cut in half or if this

can possibly even be real when it... stops.

Everything stops. The world is silent. Paul is plastic again, painted plastic on a plinth.

Pip pip and tally-ho, my good fellow.

Something twists in Richie's brain and he doesn't hear whatever joke he tries to make before descending into hysterics that wrack his whole body. As the brute force of his fear subsides, Richie is left sprawled on the grass, one arm across his face to

hide

shade himself from the wonky afternoon light. He lies there until his legs regain enough substance to support his body weight, lies there until moving seems possible again, and, remembering the curfew, remembering Bowers, decides he should head home before his folks go bananas.

That would be the cherry on this chuckalicious cake of a day.

The walk is not a long one. Richie threads through his usual shortcuts, whistling some old Buddy Holiday tune, and it doesn't occur to him until he opens the front door of his house that he did not cross a living soul on his journey. It certainly does not occur to him

it's a getting' closer

to worry until he steps into the empty lounge.

'Mom! Dad! Hey, muchachos! El jefe is home! What's going...' His voice catches as he bounds up the stairs and he wonders in spite of himself how much fear one person can take in a day before they

go crazy

flip.

It's not a question he wants the answer to.

'Mom? Dad?' he calls again, swallowing the lump that rises in his throat when he sees their room is empty too.

'In here, Richie.' Calls a soft voice from down the hall, and he is too relieved to notice that it's all wrong. At first, he is simply confused. Why are his parents in his room?

'There you a-' Richie starts, freezing in the doorway. Wentworth and Maggie Tozier are bookends on his bed, sitting rigidly, silently atop the covers. His father wears a baseball glove. Their eyes are fixed on a small pink blanket set on the bed between them, the kind of thing only big enough for a crib. His Mom has one corner in her first. Tears streak her porcelain face, and, with the instinct of an only child, Richie walks over to her, to his mother, and brushes them away.

Or tries to.

But she doesn't react. Her skin is thin beneath his fingers, and his hands, stained from his fall in the grass not hours ago, leave a faint smudge on her cheek that she doesn't wipe away. He waits for some acknowledgement that he's there. That he exists.

Nothing comes.

'Mom.' He says. 'Mom.' He tries to shake her, but can't get a grip. One of them is losing substance and he has the sickening sense that it's him, that he's being erased. 'Mom!'

Beep-beep, fuckers.

Richie opens his mouth to yell, to scream, and startles as his father stands, seizes his wrists and drags him out of the room.

'Dad! Dad, what are you – Dad!' Richie cries, but his father does not so much as look at him before slamming the door between them once more.

The blood in Richie's veins freezes.

They know, they know, they know your dirty -

Oh, I know your secret

The all too familiar horror sticks the words in his throat. He makes a choking, lost sound and races for the front door, sure of nothing except the fact that he has to get out, get away.

Shit.

Richie has no idea he's making his way to Eddie's until he arrives, and when he does it does not much surprise him. He hasn't seen Bill since their fight. Bev's Daddy scares him something stupid and besides, he wouldn't want her to get into trouble. Stan is always busy. Mike and Ben... there is something old in them. Their souls. He doesn't think he could stand the knowing looks and calm.

That leaves who it always leaves. The one it always comes down to.

Eddie.

Taking a deep, shuddering breath, Richie scrapes up a handful of debris and moves to stand under what he knows to be Eddie's bedroom window. It's still just about daylight, but if he knows the Kaspbrak's, Eddie will already have been bundled off to his room for the night, dosed to the gills with who-knows-what his ma has decided on this time.

'Eddie.' He hisses, throwing a pebble at the window. 'Eds.' A penny.

'I told you to stop fucking calling me that, Trashmouth.' Comes the reply as the window is thrown open.

'Terribly sorry, old chap.' Richie grins, trying for his usual breezy persona. If his grin is shaky, if his voice wobbles, surely Eddie is too high up to notice. 'Ah say, ah say, whet in the sam hell happened to mi casa es tu casa? You goin' to invite me in or whet?'

'Or what, asshole.' Eddie retorts, but his head bobs out of view and a few seconds later Richie is being pulled through the front door and a finger is on his lips, warning him to be quiet. He bats the hand away and mimes zipping his lips, earning an eye roll and a kick to the ankle. He flips the bird at Eddie in return and then he's being ushered up the stairs and into a bedroom not unlike his own, but cleaner.

'So -' he begins, flicking the light switch on and turning to grin at his

secret

friend.

'Shit, what happened to you?' Eddie yelps.

'What? Nothing. Fuck you. I love being personally insulted, really.'

'No, shut up, Richie, look.' Eddie insists, lifting his good arm to point at a mirror on the back of the door.

'Ah say, ah say, yessir, right away sah!' Richie snaps a salute, putting on his best Southern Gentleman Voice (something vaguely reminiscent of Yosemite Sam), and turns to face his reflection.

Holy shit.

His hair is a riot. His glasses sit funny on his face, kind of twisted on one side and smudged. His clothes and skin are torn in too many places to count, and he's so

dirty

stained by the grass, he's surprised that Eddie does not kick him out immediately. There are bruises beginning to circle his forearms. Eddie stands behind him, frozen, like he can't decide where to run.

'Richie, what –'

'He tried to kill me.' Richie whispers.

'Who, Rich?' Eddie demands, and his eyes go wide. 'The clown? Did you see the clown?' His voice rises and there is the familiar hitch of breath as he fumbles for his inhaler with one good arm. It is this, perhaps, the snaps Richie back to himself. He turns back to Eddie and grins sloppily.

'El Chupacabra! They try to keel me, señor, they try to keel me slow cause I know –'

your secret

' - donde está.'

'Alright, why don't you shut the fuck up and tell me what really happened, because you look like shit and – and – if we're about to be attacked by some fucking clown, you should tell me so I can –'

'So what, Eds? So we can what?'

'I don't fucking know!' Eddie says, and there is something so sincere, so earnest in the set of his face that Richie can't quite bring himself to say any more. He relaxes the set of his shoulders and holds his hands out in a placating gesture.

'Hey, chill the fuck out, Spaghetti Man! No clowns here – unless you count Bowers and his goons. Ran into them on my way home from the ar – from Stan's.'

'Assholes.' Eddie spits.

'No shit, Sherlock. Now, how about it Dr K? You gonna fix me up, or do I have to ask your mom?'

'Are you kidding? My Mom will have an aneurism if she sees you bleeding everywhere, Einstein. Besides, I know what I'm doing.' Eddie grumbles, reaching under his bed for a first aid kit that would put most pharmacies to shame.

'Sure about that, Eds?'

'Yes, asshole. Sit down and shut up.'

Richie sits. He perches on the bed and Eddie sits cross-legged on the floor, rummaging through his supplies.

'Say, be a sport, don't forget –'

'Suck the wound'. *I know*. The British Guy still sucks.'

'Not as well as your mom.' Richie returns quickly, but Eddie is quiet now. Focused. His hands are steady as he gently cleans Richie's wounds, and his breathing is easier than Richie's ever heard it. There's a crease on his forehead, brows knit together, and Richie has

the mad urge to brush

Rich, do not fucking touch me, do not -

it smooth with his thumb. Eddie's touch is light and cool. Sure. Richie feels his eyes well up again and wonders if he'll ever be done fucking crying.

'Rich? Richie?' Eddie starts, alarmed. His hands reach up to cup Richie's face, to try and force him to look at

me, Eddie, look at me!

him. Richie knows a gut-wrenching twist as something in him comes undone. He stifles a sob and pushes the fingers in his hair, the smell of Tide and toothpaste, the hurt, Eddie, away. Pushes it all away and lets himself double up, head pressed against his knees.

For what seems an age, the silence is broken only by Richie's increasingly ragged breaths. Then the soft sounds of Eddie shifting to sit next to him.

'Richie?'

'No.'

'Rich.'

'No.'

'Richie -'

'Fuck o-'

'*Rich*. Look. You don't have to tell me what happened. I'm not your -'

fucking boyfriend

' - Mom, or the fucking Irish Cop or - or - I'm *not*. But it's *me*. Eddie. I'm your friend. I'm a Loser, same as you, and none of this other shit matters. You don't need to be the British Guy or anyone else, but you gotta be here, okay asshole? We need you. We need you alive, and

loud, and – and – and - *here*.'

Richie sits up and faces Eddie, imploring.

'I'm not.'

'What?'

'I'm not... here, Eds. I'm not real. Sometimes it's like... like I'm already missing. Dead. It's like I'm missing and forgotten and not fucking *here*.'

There is a pause as they both consider this, the words sitting untouched between them for just a moment. Richie feels the heat rush to his face, wishes he could take them back.

Eddie picks them up.

'Real?' Eddie tugs a fistful of Richie's hair. 'Missing?' He grinds his heel down on Richie's sneaker, pinning his foot to the floor. 'Dead?' He lifts Richie's hand and holds it in the centre of his chest precisely where, 27 years later, an ugly wound will stop the heartbeat sounding between them now. 'Forgotten?' Brown eyes glare. 'Here?' With a twist of his arm, Eddie flips Richie's hand and presses, hard, straight in the centre of his palm, the nail digging in just where Bill will later use the shard of a coke bottle to seal a blood pact of sorts.

'Ow!' Richie cries petulantly, trying and failing to free his hand.

'*Here*?' Eddie insists, pressing harder so that Richie can almost see the small gaping crescent that will be left on his skin.

'Here.' He mutters, relenting. Eddie smiles, quickly masking his relief by twisting it into a smirk. Richie is dimly aware that he's never seen his friend seem so... strong. Confident. He feels stupid for ever worrying that Eddie is as delicate as his ma makes out.

'Good. Otherwise I just risked all your gross fucking bacteria for nothing, and you do know there's an aids epidemic happening, like, right now, right?' Eddie says, digging back in his first aid kit for the antiseptic so he can swab their hands clean (in all honesty, he hadn't meant to draw blood, and if Richie wasn't acting so weird, he would

probably be up here having a fucking asthma attack).

'Holy shit, you're right!' Richie gasps, mock excitement flashing on his face. 'Maybe your mom should take us to the ER, and she can wear one of those nurse outfits -'

'Beep-beep Rich.'

'Sure, I'm just saying, make sure you don't got a hangnail or something. I'm telling you, that's how it ends.'

'*Beep-beep*, Richie.' Eddie says, doing a poor job of discretely checking his hand.

'Keeding señor, keeding. You don't gotta worry about no hangnails. They don't wanna keel you *that* slow.' Richie grins. He goes to throw his arm around his friend, and thinks better of it, leaving his fist clenched by his side. If Eddie notices, he says nothing.

'As long as you're here, you're staying right? You know, if you want to -'

play loogie?

'- you can.'

Richie thinks about going home and forces back a wave of white-hot panic.

'I guess. If you want.'

'Why else would I ask, Einstein?' Eddie scoffs and begins to fuss around again. He places the first aid kit back under the bed, fishes through a chest of draws and lobs two sets of pyjamas behind him. Richie can't help but think it's deliberate when they hit him. 'Here. Get changed. You smell like -.'

'Your mom's vagina?'

'Just shut the fuck up and change before my mom starts to wonder why there's a dead body in my room.' Eddie snaps, pointing to the bathroom down the hall.

'Fine. If I get crabs or something, I'm never talking to you again.' Richie mutters, but the joke falls flat. Something queasy, uneasy, has settled over them at the mention of dead bodies. Snatching the closest set of pyjamas, Rich stands and heads cautiously across the hall to the bathroom. There he cleans his glasses, takes some steadying breaths, and wipes away the last traces of his earlier meltdown.

By the time he's back in Eddie's room, Richie has almost forgotten Paul and Bowers, his parents and the arcade...

Almost.

And that's enough for now.

It has to be.

2. Chapter 2

Richie thinks this day might never end.

He supposes he must sleep, at some point. At least for a few minutes. The night plays out on a slide projector, pictures and shapes and shadows

oh my

flaring around him as he stumbles in the halfawake haze.

He must sleep.

At some point.

He really fucking *wants to sleep*.

Eddie's asleep, lucky asshole. By the time Richie had gotten changed, Eddie was already in bed, having thrown a pillow at the other end for Richie.

'Top and tail. Gee, Eds, it's been ages since I've been to a slumber party. Hope you brought the nail polish – pink would look so cute on you!' Richie had grinned, heart in his throat. Eddie had mumbled a sleepy 'Fuck off - and don't call me Eds.' and rolled over, conking out nearly instantly.

That left Richie alone. In the dark. With his

secret

thoughts.

He was starting to wish he'd spent more time looking for whatever knock-out pills Eddie's mom was giving him.

'Eds. Pst. *Eds*.' Richie hisses now, glaring down over the duvet and knocking his heel on Eddie's shoulder. 'Wake *up*, asshat.'

There's no answer. Richie squints, trying to focus enough to read the

time on Eddie's alarm clock. No luck. He screws his eyes shut and opens them again, presses his thumb to the nick on his palm, thinking surely, any second now, the sun will start to rise.

No dice.

The moon, squat and stubborn as it glares through Eddie's curtains, seems intent on hanging around, and if he stares too long at anything it all seems to

float

blur in the weirdest way (he left his glasses on Eddie's shelf, next to what must be one of countless spare inhalers). He kind of feels like he's been hit by a truck.

It doesn't help that the Voices won't shut up.

Faggot.

Loogie.

Gonna sit down and talk to Paul.

Fairy.

Dulces sueños, señor.

It's near constant.

'Eddie.'

Nothing.

Just the moon, and the wind. The breeze that sounds like the fall of an axe.

Richie sighs. He could read or something - Eddie's mom usually gives him enough change for a comic if he goes by the drugstore; it's a collection second only to Richie's own - but he doesn't want to disturb anyone. For all his jokes, there's something about Mrs Kaspbrak that gives him the creeps.

So he lies there, awake. And aches. And waits. He can't stand to be so still.

But he can't quite bring himself to move.

Eddie just fucking *wants to sleep*.

He wanted to sleep *hours* ago. He *was* asleep hours ago. Something about his new meds completely zonks him out and makes him feel like he could

float

doze off anywhere, even in the middle of the day. It's not like he's had much else to do since his ma sent his friends packing. Since –

time for your pill, Eddie.

Since everything.

And now...

He was *asleep*, damnit! And then Richie turns up looking like, like.. like Eddie's never seen him. Like he's gone 20 rounds with

your mom

Bowers, or the clown. Not even in Neibolt did Richie look

at me, Eddie, look at me

so... scared?

Lost?

No. Richie's fucking terrified. Juniper-Hill, crazy-person terrified. It's on his skin, in his mouth, in his eyes. And whatever terrifies Richie...

Eddie stifles a gasp as his chest starts to tighten. Not now, he pleads. He balls the duvet in his fist and muffles his mouth against his cast, painfully aware that any noise, any movement, will convince Richie to drop his attempts at sleep. His lungs cave in and his head starts to pound, but he doesn't (*can't, won't*) reach for his inhaler. It's pathetic

and weak and he hates himself, but he can't – just doesn't –

what are you looking for?

He can't face Richie tonight.

He'd been secretly pleased to see him outside his window earlier. Days lying groggy and flat, 'recovering', with only his ma for company were starting to wear on Eddie's nerves. He was kind of glad when he and Richie fell into their usual bickering routine. It woke him up. Restarted something - like a defib.

But then, Richie was bleeding, and Richie was crying, and hurting, and Eddie knows that if he looks at his friend tonight, if they talk, they won't be bickering; whatever Richie was hiding behind his eyes and that stupid trash-mouth, whatever was after him, will come spilling out into every corner of Eddie's world, spilling through his pores, his bones, and he just. Can't. Face it.

Not tonight.

Not now.

So he lies there, awake, half suffocating, pretending not to notice when Richie calls for him, pretending not to notice the feet nudging him, so dizzy he swears he can feel the planet lurching, stumbling

where you going Eds?

Here? Here? Here.

around him.

He thinks this night might never end.